

Bel Canto

Newsletter of the Manatee Opera Guild

February 2025

<https://manateeoperaguild.org>



Manatee Opera Guild Celebrates our Sweetheart 2025

Please help us honor
the many contributions
of our member

Elizabeth Aversa

Wednesday, February 19
at 10 a.m.
Palm Aire Country Club
5601 Country Club Way
Sarasota, FL 34243

Menu:

Tuscan Salad

or

Chicken Milanese, Green Beans, Rice Pilaf

Dessert: Fresh Berry Panna Cotta

**To make reservations for lunch, please call, write
or email Kathy Knobel at:**

787 Ben Franklin Drive #8

Sarasota, FL 34236

knobelwd@aol.com

941-706-2490 or 941-666-3253 (cell)

Luncheon is \$35 per person. Please indicate your
choice of entrée when making your reservation.

Reservations must be received by February 14

Please bring any gift certificates, wines, or other
gifts you would like to include in the basket that
will be offered at the Fashion Show to our February
meeting.

Attendees at the Fashion Show will buy chances to
win the basket, and the revenue from these chances
is substantial.

Our Guild 2025 started out brilliantly! At our meeting,
we heard five Studio Artists – one from each general
voice type: a soprano, a mezzo, a tenor, a baritone,
and a bass. They presented a program that was varied
and wonderful. Thank you to Sarasota Opera for
making each meeting exciting and beautiful. And, we
got a new member, Cheryl Molyneaux.

At the beginning of this month, we look forward to
the exciting *Stars of Tomorrow* on the 9th at 1:30 in a
new venue for us, the Manatee High School for the
Arts on Haben Boulevard in Palmetto. Please bring
friends! At the end of the month, we will enjoy the
popular Fashion Show on the 26th at 11:30 a.m.

Please come to our February 19 meeting to celebrate
our member, Elizabeth Aversa. In her short (4-year)
membership, Elizabeth has taken on the job of
Education Chair, and in that position she has brought
us a series of lively and informative Preludes,
including her own deeply-researched and very
interesting presentations. She is a generous donor,
works with Sandy Rath to get models for our Fashion
Show, gives wise counsel to our Board, provides food
for events, and so much more.

Speaking of Elizabeth, she arranged for a talk about
opera that was given at the new Lakewood Ranch
Library on January 24. Richard Russell gave an
introduction to opera in general, and to Sarasota
Opera in particular, dispelling many myths about
opera: “It’s in a language I won’t understand,” “It’s
too expensive,” “I’d have to get really dressed up,”
“It’s for snobs,” etc.), and talking about the sheer
beauty of the music, the voices, the scenery, and the
costumes. We were flabbergasted at the number of
people who came; so many that they had to double
the size of the room! We hope that the talk will
bring new people to the Opera and to our Guild.
Many, many thanks to Richard Russell and
Elizabeth and to the Lakewood Ranch Library for
putting this event together.

See you on the 9th, the 19th, and the 26th of February!

FEBRUARY: A MONTH FOR LOVE IN OPERA

By Elizabeth Aversa

February is the month for valentines, roses, and romantic getaways. It's also the month in which the Sarasota Winter Opera Festival begins. And this season, it is all about love. But don't be fooled – these love stories don't always have happy endings! But they all give us a fine valentine's gift: beautiful music.

Opening the season is Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*. First heard in Rome in 1890, this is a popular "verismo" opera – meant to be a harsh depiction of the real lives of real people in real unseemly situations. In this opera, a man (Turridu) loves another's wife (Lola, wife of Alfio). Turridu, is depressed when he learned Lola had married while he was away in the war, has his way with Santuzza, disgracing her. Santuzza loves Turridu, but he still has eyes for Lola. Alfio challenges Turridu, and in the end the villagers hear a gun shot and that Turridu has been killed. Here is "Oh, Lola, as pretty as the smiling flowers..." sung by Turridu in Act I. He is a man in love. Here is the aria sung by Jussi Bjorling: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TKrCi4gtds>

On a happier note, we'll also hear Gioachino Rossini's *Barber of Seville* and Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* beginning in February. Both of these works are based on plays by French playwright Pierre Beaumarchais.

In *Barber of Seville* we meet Count Almaviva who is enamored of the beautiful Rosina. However, he wants to win her over as an average guy (Lindoro), not as a count, since he fears she will love him for his money and status. Barber and jack of all trades Figaro is there to help the Count with several disguises and humorous plots that lead, in the end, to the marriage and "happily ever after" for the Almaviva family. (Well, until the next opera!)

Here is one of the love songs from the Act I of the opera, "Ecco ridente in Cielo" sung by Andrew Stenson. The Count is singing to Rossina's balcony

window, hoping the woman he loves will appear. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLtuG1grr_o

Fast forward, and it's a few years later. The count and countess are an "old married couple" (probably in their 20s). In Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* we learn that the count is unfaithful and wants to seduce Figaro's intended, Susanna. Susanna, Figaro, and the countess design several ways to trick the count into seeing the error of his ways, as the countess truly does love the rogue. Here the countess laments how her marriage has been going badly, but her true love for the count inspires her to do something about it. The rest is humor at its best, but first here is Kirsten MacKinnon with the aria: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N32nHhpqwHA>

The final opera of the 2025 Winter Opera Festival centers on love and forgiveness. Giuseppe Verdi's *Stiffelio*, which premiered in 1850 in Trieste, is about an adulterous relationship involving a preacher's wife. Verdi's man of God finds out about the affair, struggles with what to do in terms of revenge, and then delivers his ultimate message of forgiveness from the pulpit. Here is a summary of the opera, along with musical excerpts. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-ooB2qjUEY>

Finally, here are links to three popular romantic scenes for your Valentine's listening. Fill in your playlist while enjoying these.

Matthew Polenzani sings "Una furtiva lagrima" from *The Elixir of Love* here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nFNzHZXSCY>

Here is "Parigi, o caro" from *La Traviata* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkedSvvggJpE&t=21s>

Angel Blue and Eric Owens sing the Act II duet from *Porgy and Bess* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xODtLZN28AY>

Happy Valentine's Day. ❤️ See you at the Opera House!

PRELUDES:



February 21: *Stiffelio*
Given by Stage Director Stephanie Sundine
February 21, 2025
9:30 coffee and treats
10:00 Presentation
Westminster Manor Auditorium
1700 21st Avenue West
Bradenton, 34205

Please Welcome New Member:

Cheryl Molyneaux

17507 Colebrook Circle
Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202

941-567-9533(c)

941-306-5808(h)

Cmolyneaux821@gmail.com

Change of address for **Babs Noah**

4636 Runabout Way, Bradenton, FL 34203
941-213-9546

Membership Meetings

Wednesday February 19 (Sweetheart Luncheon), Friday
March 14 (Spring Fling, Deane Allyn and HJD Awards),
Wednesday April 16 (New Member Recognition)



Manatee Opera Guild Presents
The Annual Fashion Show
A Celebration of Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*
Wednesday, February 26, 2025 at 11:30
a.m.
Fashions by A Tu

*The Stars of Tomorrow Concert features Sarasota Opera's nationally
recognized singers performing the most beloved arias and scenes.*

STARS OF TOMORROW

February 9, 2025 at 1:30 at the Manatee School for the Arts

Sarasota Opera

Cavalleria rusticana/Pagliacci

February 15, 7:30PM*, February 20, 7:30PM,
February 23, 1:30PM, February 26, 7:30PM,
March 1, 1:30PM, March 7, 7:30PM, March 11, 7:30PM,
March 19, 1:30PM, March 22, 7:30PM, March 29,
1:30PM

Two operas, two betrayed husbands, two tragic ends. In *Cavalleria rusticana* the calm of a Sicilian Easter morning is broken by a betrayed lover who sets off a chain of events ending in violent tragedy. In true theatrical tradition *Pagliacci's* clown tries to go on the show, but his real -life humiliation and despair lead to a grim climax. The violent passions and raw emotions of these two works changed the direction of Italian opera forever.

Barbiere di Siviglia

February 22, 7:30PM*, February 25, 7:30PM,
February 27, 7:30PM, March 2, 1:30PM, March 5,
7:30PM
March 9, 1:30PM, March 14, 7:30PM, March 21,
7:30PM
March 27, 1:30PM, March 29, 7:30PM

Determined to win the heart of the beautiful Rosina, Count Almaviva enlists the help of Figaro, the barber of Seville, to steal her away from her guardian, Dr. Bartolo. Hilarious complications ensue to some of opera's most delightful music. *The Barber of Seville* is one of the most beloved comedic works in the operatic repertory

Marriage of Figaro

March 8, 7:00PM*, March 13, 7:00PM, March 16,
1:30PM, March 19, 7:00PM, March 22, 1:30PM,
March 25, 7:00PM, March 28, 7:00PM

Continuing the story of *The Barber of Seville*, Count Almaviva's eye has now wandered and his current objective is Susanna, Figaro's fiancée. The distressed couple, along with Rosina (now the Countess Almaviva) conspire to reveal the count's lechery, despite the many obstacles thrown in their way. Mozart's musical genius, along with Lorenzo DaPonte's witty libretto make *The Marriage of Figaro* one of opera's masterpiece.

Stiffelio

March 15, 7:30PM*, March 18, 7:30PM
March 20, 7:30PM, March 23, 1:30PM
March 26, 7:30PM, March 30, 1:30PM

A Protestant minister returns from a mission abroad to be confronted by his wife's infidelity. *Stiffelio* faces his wife's transgression, battling his all-too-human emotions with his religious faith. Written just before *Rigoletto*, this long-neglected, emotionally charged work is now recognized as an important work by Verdi.

*Opening Night performances are preceded by an optional dinner.

Special Events

Moonlight & Melodies: Mozart's Viennese Feast

A festive event transporting guests to Mozart's Vienna.

Tuesday, February 18, 2025, 6:30 PM
Sarasota Opera House Courtyard
\$225 Per Person | Limited Seating

Salute to the Stars

Be surrounded by the celebration and sounds of Sarasota Opera's most outstanding Apprentice and Studio Artists being honored. Enjoy a gourmet lunch with performances by the awardees. Awards are presented through the generosity of visionary individuals as well as the Sarasota and Manatee Opera Guilds.

Tuesday, March 25, 2025, 11:30 AM
Sarasota Yacht Club
Per Person Levels \$85 and \$150 12 PM, Program
and Performances by Award Winners
12:30 PM, Luncheon



If there are typos or grammar mistakes in this issue, thank my proofreader, shown here at work.